

31 March 1972

STAT



I hope it makes sense to think about an Organizational Development Program as having to go through phases. I think of Planning, Data Collection and Analysis as preliminary to and in some respects different from the main body of the program. Planning, Collecting and Analyzing have to be done in rather rigid, perhaps bureaucratic ways, so that you can be flexible with the subsequent activities.

Much of the impetus for this program comes from intuitive kinds of feelings about problems and needs within the Agency and the Directorate. It seems to me problems are surfaced selectively to prove or disprove a point without being analyzed objectively. Your proposed questionnaire is aimed at objective analysis. Your problem now is to sharpen that aim. A point to be remembered is that you can handle subjective data, feelings, attitudes, etc. in an objective manner. The results aren't as satisfactory as an experiment in Physics or Chemistry, but when well done, results are persuasive. You are dealing with emotional issues and I think you need to proceed carefully from step to step.

I don't think there is any argument that careful, systematic thought and preparation needs to precede your job. What troubles me is that too much of this preparatory kind of thing blunts the impact of the whole program. It translates very readily into time -- too much time between concept and reality ruins whatever you are trying to do. Despite all this, I still believe a conceptual model is needed. Some means for hanging pieces together. You need a set of objectives even if they are general, motherhood type things. Under each objective comes a plan for achieving the objective and a series of tasks for executing the plan. One of the tasks probably common to all objectives is to build a data base which sheds some light on problems to be solved. I understand your questionnaire to be part of the data base building task. Perhaps there are other tasks which contribute to more than one objective. If so, they should be recognized simply to avoid duplicative effort.

The whole business of objectives, tasks, sub-tasks and so forth really has to precede the questionnaire. Where are you going? Why do you want to get there? How are you going to travel? What part of the universe are you in? How does that part relate to the other parts?

I think these kinds of questions need to be thought about and answered in at least some tentative way before the questionnaire or working groups or whatever get underway.

Before people react, they have to have something to react to. A questionnaire sent out in the context of an Organizational Development program is going to get answered in terms of individual biases about Organizational Development. What you really want to know is individual bias about goals, problems, and all that good stuff.

Before you evaluate responses to a questionnaire, you have to have some criteria to work against. As a matter of fact, you can't even ask meaningful questions unless you have something to ask questions about.

A consultant type would be immensely valuable by supplying you an independent audit for each step. I wouldn't think you need someone with a national reputation. Rather someone who knows what this is all about. You don't need anyone to supply this effort with a stamp of approval just so it's easier to sell or defend. The effort has to stand or fall on its own merits. The whole purpose of these preliminary steps is to make certain of where it's standing.

An added thought or two --

Your longer term objective is to make rational changes in the Support Directorate which - a) allow the Directorate to have a more pronounced impact on Agency planning and operations, b) develop a more cohesive, responsive internal management structure and c) provide a greater sense of participation and involvement on the part of Support careerists. This is all motherhood stuff, and I wouldn't defend these objectives if I could. The only point is that they need to be stated and then to be broken down into shorter term goals (or objectives, I never know which is which) allowing you to make some progress but which also allow you to test the ground immediately ahead.

It would be nice to have Mr. Coffey's active participation in this, but that's not very likely. I think you have to act as his alter-ego during this preliminary period. You'll have to state some objectives for him and also tell him why they should be his objectives. If you can get him reacting to the statements, he could surprise you by providing objectives, etc.